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MALECITE TALES.

BY FRANK G. SPECK.

THE following Malecite tales furnish us with variants of some themes already known, and a few which are not represented in the material now in print from this tribe. The first two tales relating to the culture-hero Gluskap are typical of the region. In W. H. Mechling's collection,¹ the lengthy composite culture-hero cycle which he gives contains these episodes, although not in similar associations. In the second story, particularly, a feature of significance is the social explanatory element accounting for the transformation of human beings into marine animals. There is reason to consider this tale in its present form as one of considerable importance, because, in a related form, it occurs among the neighboring Penobscot as a social origin myth, with its scene transferred to the Penobscot valley. The pattern of the story occurs three times in Mechling's Malecite collection, once in Rand's Micmac tales, and in Leland's mixed Wabanaki series, — all in differing associations, yet not in the form recorded here as an explanatory factor. In regard to the culture-hero tales of the Wabanaki tribes, the elementary ideas seem to be largely common property to all. The versions, however, vary considerably in composition around certain central features. There is, moreover, some variation in the versions given by different narrators in the same tribe, as a comparison of Mechling's and Jack's with those given here will show. A more detailed study of the mythology of the northeast, I feel safe in saying, will show the same thing that we see manifested in a minor degree in these collections; namely, the process of element composition in myth cycles, to which Dr. Boas has already called attention.² The other tales in this collection, through sheer accident in the circumstances of selection among narrators, are new to the records of Malecite folk-lore. It seems improbable, from the present aspect of the situation, that any amount of myth-collecting will be likely to exhaust the possibilities among the eight hundred Malecite now living.

I. GLUSKAP AND HIS GRANDMOTHER.³

Gluskap lived with his grandmother in a stone canoe which was an island. In this they floated about on the water. Gluskap became

¹ W. H. Mechling, *Malecite Tales* (Memoir 49, Anthropological Series, No. 4, GSCan).

² F. Boas, *Development of Folk Tales and Myths* (Scientific Monthly, October, 1916); and *Introduction to the Traditions of the Thompson River Indians* (MAFLS 7 [1898]).

³ Narrated by Gabe Paul (age 57), at present living at Oldtown, Me., but born and raised at Central Kingsclear, N.B. For another version of the stone canoe, beaver pursuit, and origin of Reversing Falls feature, cf. W. H. Mechling, *Malecite Tales* (Memoir 49, Anthropological Series, No. 4, Geological Survey of Canada, p. 1); and E. Jack, *Maleseet Legends* (JAFL 8 : 194). The wind episode is given by Mechling in another association (*op. cit.*, pp. 45 and 49).

lonesome for companions, and asked his grandmother whether or not there were other people in the world. She told him that there were other people far up the river (St. John's River). Then they paddled their island canoe into St. John's harbor, where the canoe went aground and is now to be seen as Partridge Island lying in the mouth of the harbor. Gluskap then got out of the canoe, and started to hunt the beaver who lived in the river above the falls now known as the Reversing Falls. At the first pursuit the beaver ran away up-stream, whereupon Gluskap broke the dam and caused the falls to be as they now are. Then Gluskap pursued him, and, in order to drive him back down-stream, threw an immense stone up-river ahead of the beaver. This stone may still be seen at Tobique, about two hundred miles from the mouth of the river. Then his grandmother told him that there were people at Tobique, and he started up-river to find them. On the way up, Gluskap had to leave his snowshoes behind, as the snow began to melt, and the walking became very bad. The snowshoes may still be seen as the islands in the river called Snowshoe Islands. When he got to Tobique, he found the people so small, that he called them midgets. He was not satisfied. Then he returned to the coast to his grandmother, and the beaver got away.

As they were going about on the water in a canoe, the wind became so strong that they could not fish. Gluskap's grandmother then told Gluskap that he would have to fix the wind so that it would not blow so strongly. Said Gluskap, "I know how," and with that he stood up in the canoe, and with his stone knife stabbed into the air. The wind calmed; the sea soon became so calm that the fish could not live; the water became thick and foul. Then Gluskap started travelling to find the source of the wind and to remedy matters. He came to where a large bird lived, and found him lying with one wing cut off. Then he healed the wing and told the bird to fan the air a little at a time, and then allow it to become calm, and then again to fan a little. Since then it has been thus; and the sea is at times rough, and again becomes calm so that people can travel abroad on it.

2. MALECITE VERSION OF THE WATER-FAMINE AND HUMAN TRANSFORMATION MYTH.¹

Agləbe'm kept back all the water in the world; so that rivers

¹ Narrated by Gabe Paul. A portion of this tale, the killing of "Akwulabemu," is recorded by Mechling in three places. In one, Gluskap is the hero (*op. cit.*, pp. 6-7); in two others, Gluskap is not directly concerned with the event (*op. cit.*, pp. 46 and 53-54). H. Stamp (JAFL 28 : 247) provides another variant, with Aza (John) as the hero. The same motive occurs in S. T. Rand, *Legends of the Micmacs* (p. 68); and a Passamaquoddy occurrence, following rather closely the one cited above, is given by C. G. Leland, *Algonquin Legends of New England*, pp. 114-119. For the spelling of Indian words see *Phonetic Transcription of Indian Languages* (Report of Committee of American Anthropological Association).

stopped flowing, and lakes dried up, and the people everywhere began dying of thirst. As a last resort, they sent a messenger to him to ask him to give the people water; but he refused, and gave the messenger only a drink from the water in which he washed. But this was not enough to satisfy even the thirst of one. Then the people began complaining, some saying, "I'm as dry as a fish," "I'm as dry as a frog," "I'm as dry as a turtle," "I'm as dry as a beaver," and the like, as they were on the verge of dying of thirst. At last a great man was sent to Aglabe'm to beg him to release the water for the people. Aglabe'm refused, saying that he needed it himself to lie in. Then the messenger felled a tree, so that it fell on top of the monster and killed him. The body of this tree became the main river (St. John's River), and the branches became the tributary branches of the river, while the leaves became the ponds at the heads of these streams. As the waters flowed down to the villages of the people again, they plunged in to drink, and became transformed into the animals to which they had likened themselves when formerly complaining of their thirst.

3. GLUSKAP ASSIGNS THE ANIMALS' FOOD.¹

Once, as Gluskap was wandering along the beach, he saw a number of animals quarrelling over the division of meat in the carcass of a dead whale which had floated ashore. Gulls were screaming and quarrelling over strips of flesh hanging from the head and body; ants were quarrelling over portions of the brain inside the skull. Gluskap ordered them to stop quarrelling, and announced that henceforth foxes and their kin should eat the meat on the bones, that the gulls should find their subsistence on the fat of the carcass, that the ants should have the skull and its contents, and that the spider should own the skeleton, inside which he might spin his web to capture his prey. Since then the animals have followed this division of food. The ants built their house of dirt over the skull. So to-day when the Indians see an ant hill, which they sometimes call "whale head," the mound reminds them of the story.

4. THE BEAVER AND THE MUSKRAT CHANGE TAILS.²

Long ago the beaver possessed a long, narrow tail; and the muskrat had a short, broad one. The beaver liked to dive, but his tail did not help him very much; while the muskrat found that his tail dragged when he wanted to swim fast. Each one thought that the other's tail would suit him better, so one of them proposed an exchange. There-

¹ Compare Mechling (*op. cit.*, p. 61) for a similar idea in a broken version, where Fisher divides a snake's head, and again (p. 77) where Partridge divides a moose-head.

² Narrated by Old Joe Francis. An identical version is recorded from the Ojibwa of Rama (cf. G. E. Laidlow, *Ojibwa Myths and Tales* [Annual Archeological Report of Ontario, 1915, p. 73]).

upon the muskrat took the long, narrow tail; and the beaver took the broad, flat one; and they have had these ever since. Once the muskrat asked the beaver to change back again, but the beaver refused.

5. THE BEAVER AND MUSKRAT CHANGE THEIR HAUNTS.¹

The muskrat used to live in the kind of poplar-grove that the beaver haunts now, while the beaver used to eat sweet flag² and live in the marshes. Thinking that their haunts were not suited to them, it was proposed that they exchange; and the beaver took the muskrat's neighborhood, and the muskrat moved to the meadows. Since then their habits have been as they are now.

6. THE WOMAN WHO MARRIED A DOG.

There was once a woman who admired the face of a dog. That night the dog turned into a man and became her husband. He told the woman, however, never to make any reference to the fact. She did as he said for a long time, until one day she observed some dogs chasing a bitch about the village, whereupon she asked him if he would like to be one of the dogs. "Yes," he declared, and immediately turned back into a dog and ran away with the others.

7. THE EXPERT SAILOR.³

(A European Story.)

There was once a man who had too many children, so he told his youngest boy to go away and make his living somewhere else. The boy wandered down by the seashore, where he saw a ship in the harbor. The crew were on shore cutting timber. He went up to the captain and asked to be hired as a sailor. The captain asked him what he could do. He said that he was an expert and could do anything on board ship that nobody else could do. The captain hired him. During the first week at sea the expert sailor made a hiding-place for himself in the hold among the cargo, and saved part of his daily rations, which he stored away in his hiding-place. Before long a great storm came up; and when the ship began to toss, and the water to wash over the deck, the new man hid himself away, where he lived for a week on the stored provisions. No one knew where he was, but it was thought that he had been washed away in the tempest. One calm night, when all but the deck watch had turned in, he let himself over the side of the vessel, swam out a little ways, and then began shouting for some one to throw him a rope. The watch heard him, and the crew was

¹ Narrated by Sapiel Paul.

² *Acorus calamus*.

³ This and the ensuing tale were narrated in English by Gabe Perley of Tobique, N.B.

awakened to drag him aboard. "Where have you been?" said the captain. "We thought you were drowned overboard." — "No," said the expert, "I was knocked overboard in the storm, and it blew so hard that I have been swimming ever since, and couldn't catch up with you until now. *Ki'i* but I'm hungry!" They were greatly impressed, and he was given food, which he finished with due appreciation. Pretty soon the vessel reached a port; and while she lay in the harbor loading, to pass away the time the captain made a wager with the captain of another vessel that he had the most expert sailor in his crew. The next day the captain told the expert sailor that he wanted him to outdo the other crew's champion in the rigging. The sailor agreed, but was inwardly very much frightened, for he had never been on the mast. The first feat which the champion of the other crew performed was to run up and down the rigging and sit on the cross-trees. The expert sailor then started up the rigging for his turn. As he climbed, he became more and more dizzy, until, reaching the cross-trees, he hardly turned around before he swirled and fell toward the deck. Just before striking, however, he caught the end of a dangling rope, and hung there until he came to himself. When they got him safely down, his captain was very proud of him. The champion of the rival crew gave up, for the thing was a little beyond his ability.

The next day they arranged for a swimming-race. The captain told the expert sailor to get whatever he needed in preparation; so the expert sailor went ashore, and bought twenty-five dollars' worth of pork and beans, warm flannels, a cap, tobacco, and a bottle of rum. Next morning he piled them on the deck near the rail; and when his rival came on board, they prepared for the start. The expert sailor began binding up his goods, while the other man began taking off his clothes. "What are you going to do with all those provisions?" the latter asked. "Why, I'm going on a swimming-race, and I may be gone for a week or so. I'll want all the warm clothes, food, and drink I can take, and I can't loan any to you." — "Where are you going to swim to?" the other swimmer asked. "I'm going until I strike the first land," said the expert. The other man gave in.

8. POLTCI'TC HOODWINKS THE KING.

(*A European Story.*)

A man named Poltci'tc¹ became a great friend of the king. The king used to visit him and talk with him so much, that Poltci'tc decided to play a trick on him. Poltci'tc happened to know where a band of robbers were accustomed to gather. He prepared an old

¹ *Po'llei'tc* means "little Paul." The form of the name is in part Micmac (*-tei'tc*, Micmac diminutive). This might be a clew to the secondary origin of the tale.

door with hinges and chains on it, and carried it up into the tree one day, under which the robbers came at night to divide their money. That night while the robbers were counting, and quarrelling over the money, just as one of them said to another, "The Devil take you!" Poltci'tc let fall the door. The robbers ran away in a fright. Poltci'tc came town, took their money, and went home. The next morning when the king came to see him, he found Poltci'tc sweeping the money in a pile out of his door.¹ "Where did you get so much money, Poltci'tc? I didn't know you were so rich."—"Oh," said Poltci'tc, "I sold my hog and got a dollar for every bristle on his hide." Then king then went home, and ordered all his hogs in the royal stables to be killed and their skins taken to the hide-merchant. His servant sold the hides for five dollars a hundred pounds, and brought the money to the king. He was very angry at Poltci'tc and decided to have him killed. That night Poltci'tc took the pig's bladder, filled it full of blood, and hung it around his wife's neck. The next morning when the king came to have Poltci'tc killed, he found Poltci'tc in a great rage with his wife, belaboring her and crying, "I will stop your scolding, take that, take that!" At the same time he took his knife, stabbed her in the neck apparently, and the blood flew all over when he dragged her into the other room, and left her quiet. Before long she came out very subdued, and went about her work. The king forgot his anger, and said, "How do you do that? That is a fine way to stop a scolding woman. Just the thing for my wife."—"With this knife," said Poltci'tc. The king borrowed the knife, went home, and, as soon as his wife began to scold him for being so easily duped, he fell upon her and stabbed her in the throat. "I will stop your scolding, take that, take that!" And when the blood flew all over, he dragged her in the other room, where she remained quiet. The king waited for her to come out subdued and go about her work, but she didn't come. "Now Poltci'tc must die," for the king was very angry this time. He ordered Poltci'tc to be put in a bag and thrown into the rapids. The driver took him to the head of the falls, but on the way stopped at the inn to have a drink, leaving Poltci'tc in the bag outside on the cart. In the mean time a farmer came along driving a herd of beautiful cattle. Poltci'tc was singing. "What are you singing about there in the bag?"—"Oh," sang Poltci'tc, "I'm going to heaven, I'm going to heaven to-day."—"Ki'i. That's where I want to go. How do you get there?"—"I'll get there in this bag," said Poltci'tc. The farmer urged Poltci'tc to change places with him, giving him his cattle for the privilege. Poltci'tc agreed, was released by the farmer, bagged him in his place, and trudged away with the cattle. Now the driver came out and took the bag to the water's edge,

¹ See Elsie Clews Parsons (MAFLS 13 : 92, note 2).

saying, "Good-by, Poltci'tc!" — "I'm not Poltci'tc!" shouted the man in the bag. "Yes, you are!" Splash! Poltci'tc, driving his cattle home, met the king on his way to the scene. "Well, well! where did you get those beautiful cattle? I thought you were drowned," said the king. "Yes," said Poltci'tc, "I was thrown over, but not quite near enough to the falls; for where I fell, I found these cattle in the bottom of the river, but just a little farther there were twice as many and twice as handsome. The next time be sure to have me thrown nearer the edge of the falls. I wish I could go back and get them now," added Poltci'tc. "Oh, no!" said the king, "let me go! Those are the best animals I have ever seen." Then he ordered himself to be bagged and thrown in on the brink of the falls, and they carried out his order.¹

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¹ C.-M. Barbeau, "Contes populaires Canadiens" (JAFL 29 : 101); A. M. Espinosa, "Comparative Notes on New-Mexican and Mexican Spanish Folk-Tales" (JAFL 27 : 221); Bolte u. Polivka, 2 : 1.